

STEEPLE CLAYDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment 2013-2033

FEBRUARY 2017

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of any significant environmental effects resulting from the policies and proposals of the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan. The plan has been informed by this Draft SEA, as per Stage B of the process. The baseline evidence is contained in the Scoping Report. The Draft SEA report is now also being consulted on, as per Stages C and D of the process. The comments made on both documents will be considered by the Parish Council as it prepares their final versions for the independent examination prior to the referendum.

The Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of policies for the use and development of land in the Parish of Steeple Claydon in the plan period from 2013 to 2033. These policies, together with the policies of the development plan – that is the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) – and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), will be used by the Aylesbury Vale District Council in determining planning applications once the Neighbourhood Plan is approved in due course. The Neighbourhood Plan has also been informed by the reasoning and evidence base of the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP).

The Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) was adopted by the District Council in 2004 and covered the period to 2011. Although its housing policies are now out of date, a number of other policies have been saved for use in determining planning applications in the District. The VALP will replace the AVDLP and a draft was published for consultation in July 2016. The District Council hopes to be able to submit the VALP for examination by the end of 2017 and then to adopt it during 2018. The VALP will set the spatial and growth strategy for the District over the plan period 2013 to 2033 and will contain development management policies to replace those saved from the AVDLP.

The District Council has recently announced that the assumptions made in the Draft VALP in respect of housing supply have changed. It now seems likely that the VALP will not need to plan for as much unmet housing need from its neighbouring districts (Chiltern and Wycombe) as originally thought. The implications of this are not yet known for parishes like Steeple Claydon and have resulted in a further delay to the timetable for the adoption of the VALP. Even so, there are a number of important policy issues that have generated considerable concern – not least the rationale for distributing housing growth across the rural areas of the District – that may become clearer at that point. If so, then the final submission documents of the Neighbourhood Plan will take those matters into account as necessary. Although it is likely that the Neighbourhood Plan will be examined before the adoption of the VALP, and therefore it must have regard to its general conformity with the saved policies of the AVDLP, the Parish Council has carefully considered the evidence and reasoning of the VALP.

The main issue faced by the Neighbourhood Plan is to plan for a scale of housing development over the plan period that, with the housing already committed, has no recent precedent. There have been 115 new homes consented since April 2013 with undetermined planning applications totalling another 121 homes on three sites. That scale of development will lead to a growth of the village of more than 25% within a decade.



This need not be a problem for local people, if new development creates opportunities to address longstanding problems in the village and is located on its least sensitive edges. The problems are the locations and premises of the village store (the Co-op) and GP surgery, both of which would benefit from better-located, modern buildings. The Co-op can be considered to be in the centre of the village but its building is far too small to meet the needs of the village and inadequate parking creates traffic and pedestrian safety hazards at the tight corner of West Street/Chaloners Hill. The surgery is popular and is able to meet the current needs of the village and wider area, but is limited in its capacity, suffers lack of access for mobility impaired patients, and already causes car parking problems on the surrounding roads. Both sites are suited to redevelopment for housing.

The HS2 and East–West Rail proposals both pass through the Parish to the west and south of the village. Their construction over the plan period will itself be the most significant village impact in terms of environmental effects. The Infrastructure Maintenance Depot proposed at the junction of the two projects and the rail works will alter the appearance of those parts of the Parish. Beyond that, the Parish has no urgent social, economic or environmental issues that the Neighbourhood Plan has had to grapple with. Those matters that do need addressing are best dealt with at a national or District planning scale, if indeed the land use planning system is able to address them at all.

The Scoping Report identified the essential baseline environmental information to support this report. It noted the presence of 24 listed buildings scattered around the village (but no Conservation Area) and an archaeological notification area around St. Michael's Church (Grade II*). There are no designated sites of biodiversity value, though there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest just beyond the southern boundary of the Parish at Sheephouse Wood, and the District Council has noted a small number of 'notable species' on edge of the village. The landscape character differs between the northern and western sides of the village on the one hand ('Shallow Valleys' type), and the southern and eastern side on the other ('Wooded Rolling Lowlands' type). The sensitivities of those landscapes to new development also differs, with the land north and west of the village considered as more sensitive in principle than its other edges. The area includes two rivers which have been classified under the Water Framework Directive. Both these watercourses have associated floodplains of Flood Zone 2 and 3 that swing around the western edge of the village and across its north and south.

To assess the environmental performance of the Neighbourhood Plan, the following assessment framework has been adopted.

- To conserve and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historical and cultural environment of the Parish
- To minimise the visual effects of new development on the landscape character of the Parish
- To reduce flood risk resulting from new development.

The proposed framework was consulted upon with the statutory consultees as part of the SEA Scoping Report. It is drawn from the most relevant SEA Objectives of the VALP so that, where possible and relevant, data sets can be shared for ongoing monitoring purposes.



There is generally a neutral to positive relationship between the two sets of objectives, although there is potential for negative effects in a number of cases. The positive relationships are those that result from the objective of the Plan to ensure that new buildings integrate well with the character of the village and its surrounding countryside. Its support for rural businesses and community assets may also have positive effects if they result in development that enhances the character of listed buildings and invests in their long-term repair and maintenance. Similarly, improving rural businesses may create opportunities to invest in landscape enhancement.

The risks of negative effects are possible in almost all the objectives, if they lead to poorly located or designed development proposals. There is the potential for harmful heritage, landscape and flooding effects, especially with new housing development schemes. In each case, any policies in pursuit of these objectives must ensure that this potential has been taken into account and avoided, or at least minimised and satisfactorily mitigated.

In general terms, the policies will have neutral environmental impacts with a small number of positive effects and the potential for two negative effects. The Settlement Boundary of Policy SC1 will have the positive effect of containing the growth of the village to avoid unplanned incursions into the landscape, or into flood risk areas. However, in promoting development inside the boundary as a matter of principle, there is the potential for a negative heritage effect if the location and/or design of infill and windfall proposals do not respect the character of listed buildings and their settings. Policy SC8 on Design is helpful in this case, as it establishes some key design principles with this in mind.

In accommodating the allocations of policies SC2 and SC5 to meet local housing needs, Policy SC1 and those policies will inevitably lead to a harmful landscape effect given their respective edge of village, greenfield locations. In the absence of sufficient available brownfield or other land within the village, this effect cannot be avoided. However, in both cases, many of these effects can be mitigated successfully given the existing relationship between the sites and the village edges, as both are contained on two of their sides by existing building and benefit from the topography and enclosed nature of the land.

Of the other sites, none perform better than the sites selected, though none perform significantly worse either. The main alternative to the Molly's Field site of Policy SC2 would deliver a similar scale of housing development and, in theory, could also accommodate relocated food store and surgery uses. However, in refusing the Buckingham Road application, the District Council considers there are landscape effects of development in that location that such a scale of development could not satisfactorily mitigate (even though the landscape character assessment concluded that in general terms that side of the village was less sensitive to development).

In respect of the other policies, the reasonable alternative of having no policy will have only neutral effects, as proposals will be judged against other national or local planning policies. In overall terms, therefore, the sustainability effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are generally assessed as neutral but are occasionally positive.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of any significant environmental effects resulting from the policies and proposals of the Pre-submission Plan ('the Neighbourhood Plan') in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42 on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Figure 1 below shows the designated Neighbourhood Area.

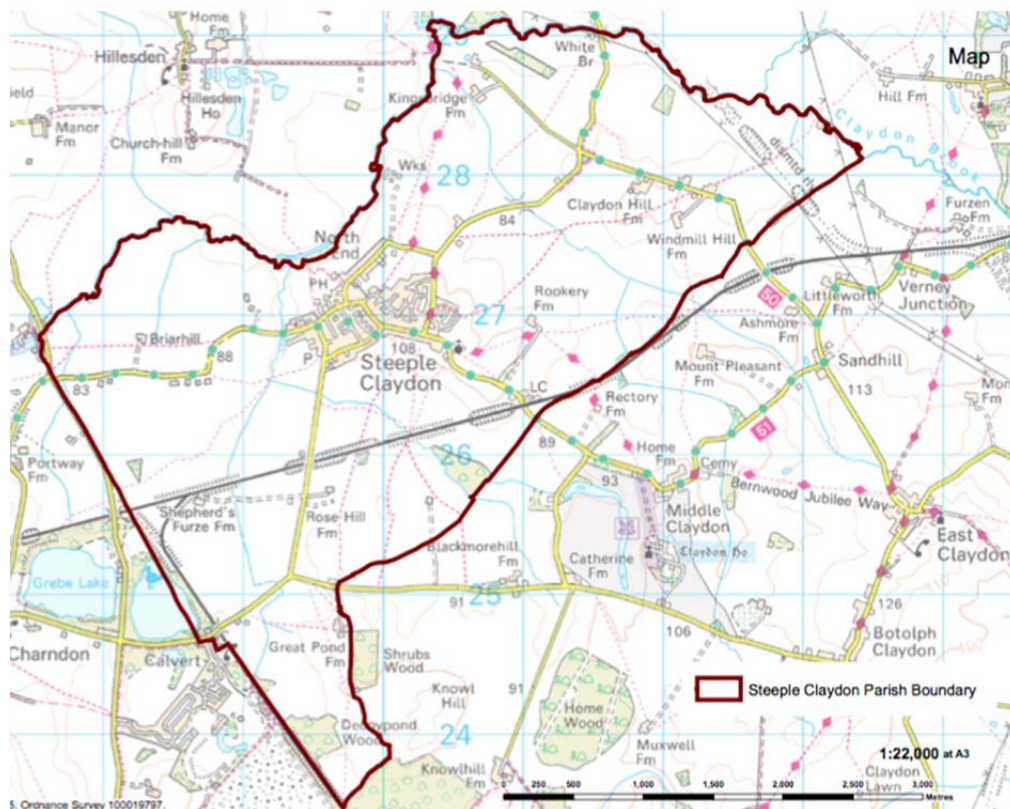


Figure 1 The Designated Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Area

1.2 The pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan has been published by Steeple Claydon Parish Council ('the Parish Council') for consultation under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. The local planning authority, Aylesbury Vale District Council ('the District Council'), issued a screening opinion in January 2016 requiring an SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan under the Environmental Assessment of Plans Programmes Regulations 2004 (see the relevant extract in Appendix A).

1.3 A Scoping Report, (as part of Stage A of the process – see Table 1 in Section 2 below) was consulted on for the minimum five-week period during June and July 2016, in line with the Regulations (attached as Appendix B). The comments received on the proposed scope of sustainability objectives were supportive and the objectives are set out in Section 7 of this Report.

1.4 The Pre-Submission version of the plan has been informed by this Draft SEA, as per Stage B of the process. The baseline evidence is contained in the Scoping Report.



1.5 The Draft SEA report is now also being consulted on, as per Stages C and D of the process. The comments made on both documents will be considered by the Parish Council as it prepares their final versions for the independent examination prior to the referendum. The ongoing monitoring of the effects of implementing the plan (Stage E of the process) is covered in Section 11 of this report.

1.6 The report provides an assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies and seeks to do it in a way that is proportionate to this task and that recognises the limitations of the available data and means of measuring direct impacts.



2. BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

2.1 Through the SA/SEA, the social, environmental and economic effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are tested to ensure that these promote sustainable development and that the Neighbourhood Plan avoids causing any significant environmental effects.

2.2 The combined process involves a simple evaluation of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan as follows:

- An outline of the contents, main objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, and relationship with other relevant plans or programmes
- The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan
- The social, economic and environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected
- Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
- The environmental protection objectives, established at international, community or national levels, which are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation
- The likely significant effects on the local economy, society and the environment
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Neighbourhood Plan
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives chosen, and a description of how such assessment was undertaken, including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of expertise) encountered in compiling the required information
- A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

2.3 The methodology for the assessment is intended to be proportionate to the task of assessing the modest development proposals of this Neighbourhood Plan in a relatively small rural area. A summary of the process, derived from the 2004 guidance, is contained in Table 1.

Table 1 The SEA process

The SEA process	
Scoping	<p>STAGE A: This stage sets the context of the assessment by identifying the baseline data and establishing the scope of the assessment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of relevant plans, policies and programmes. Any existing requirements that need to be taken into account or incorporated into the plan are identified. 2. Review of baseline information. Data about environmental, social and economic issues is collected, together with an indication as to how these may change in the future without the plan or programme under preparation. 3. Identification of Sustainability Issues. The review of plans and policies, together with the baseline information, are used to identify the key sustainability issues which could impact the plan. 4. Development of the SEA Framework. The assessment criteria are used to assess the impact of the plan or programme. 5. Identification of initial plan options. Taking into account best practice, initial identification of options and reasonable alternatives undertaken. 6. Consultation. On the scope and alternatives for assessment it is necessary to consult statutory consultees, that is Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.
Assessment	<p>STAGE B: This stage involves the assessment of the any likely significant effects of the plan policies (and any reasonable alternatives) on the key sustainability issues identified.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalisation of the Plan options and alternatives for testing. 2. Testing the Plan Objectives against the SEA Framework. The Plan Objectives are tested to ensure compliance sustainability principles. 3. Evaluation of plan options and alternatives. The SEA Framework is used to assess various plan options by identifying the potential sustainability effects of the plan, and to assist in the refinement of the policies. 4. Predicting and evaluating the effects of the plan. To predict the significant effects of the plan and assist in the refinement of the policies. 5. Consideration of ways to mitigate adverse effects and maximise beneficial effects. To ensure that all potential mitigation measures and measures for maximising beneficial effects are identified. 6. Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects



	<p>of implementing the Plan. To detail the means by which the sustainability performance of the plan can be assessed and monitored.</p> <p>This assessment is used to feed into the development of a plan or programme to help ensure the most sustainable option is selected. The SEA framework is also used to assess the sustainability implications of the draft policies and the results used to inform policy development.</p>
<p>Reporting</p>	<p>STAGE C: Preparation of the SEA Report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The findings of the assessment, together with how it has influenced the development of the plan, are identified and set out in a draft environmental report together with the recommendations on how to prevent, reduce, or offset any significant negative impacts arising from the plan. <p>STAGE D: Consultation to seek representations from consultation bodies and the general public.</p> <p>This is an ongoing process. Consultation of the draft SEA Report is undertaken into account and used to influence further iterations of the sustainability appraisal process.</p>
<p>Adoption and Monitoring</p>	<p>STAGE E: Monitoring</p> <p>Following adoption of the Plan, the significant effects of implementing the Plan are measured and any adverse effects are responded to. The results are fed into the future plans and sustainability appraisals.</p>



3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES AND OTHER PROGRAMMES

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of policies for the use and development of land in the Parish of Steeple Claydon in the plan period from 2013 to 2033. These policies, together with the policies of the development plan – that is the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) – and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), will be used by the District Council in determining planning applications once the Neighbourhood Plan is approved. The Neighbourhood Plan has also been informed by the reasoning and evidence base of the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

Vision

3.2 Its policy framework is based on and supports the following vision for the future of the parish:

To achieve an incremental development of Steeple Claydon that respects the rural nature of the parish and offers housing and social/economic opportunities for current and future generations.

3.3 The vision is largely inspired by the responses to the parish survey questionnaire, the feedback responses and, more broadly, by the interactions with residents during the preparation of the Plan.

Objectives

3.4 To achieve this vision a number of key objectives have been identified as follows:

- To promote limited small housing development and proactively direct it to preferred land types
- To encourage development which addresses local housing and community infrastructure needs
- To ensure that the development of the built form integrates well with the predominant character of the established housing in the area, including listed buildings and those buildings of an historical and architectural interest to the parish
- To ensure that all new development within the parish is configured to optimise high-speed broadband connectivity, integrate energy efficient technologies and limit light pollution
- To support land-based and land-related rural businesses as well as home-based business/work
- To encourage appropriate employment use for land within the parish in support of local employment opportunities
- To protect and enhance community assets (facilities, buildings and land).

3.5 AVDC has planning policies that are helping to shape strategy and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan comprising the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan. It is in the process of replacing that plan with the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

The Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP)

3.6 This version of the Local Plan was adopted by the District Council in 2004 and covered the period to 2011. Although its housing policies are now out of



date, a number of other policies have been saved for use in determining planning applications in the District. Of these, the most relevant to this parish are:

- Policy GP2 – Affordable housing
- Policy GP32 – Retention of community assets: protection of shops, public houses and post offices; resisting proposals that will lead to the loss of valued community assets
- Policy GP35 – Design of new development: sets out the built design principles for new development.

The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)

3.7 The VALP will replace the AVDLP and a draft was published for consultation in July 2016. The District Council hopes to be able to submit the VALP for examination by the end of 2017 and then to adopt it during 2018. The VALP will set the spatial and growth strategy for the District over the plan period 2013 to 2033 and will contain development management policies to replace those saved from the AVDLP.

3.8 The most relevant strategic policies proposed in the Draft VALP are:

- S3 – Settlement Hierarchy and Cohesive Development: identifies Steeple Claydon village as a 'larger village' in the hierarchy
- S9 – Securing Development through Neighbourhood Planning: establishes the core relationship between the VALP and neighbourhood plans
- D5 – Housing Development at Larger Villages: proposes a 22% increase in the housing stock of Steeple Claydon over the plan period, resulting in a need for an additional 92 homes to be planned in the period to 2033, once commitments and completions since April 2013 have been taken into account
- D9 – Provision of Employment Land: encourages the intensification of existing sites amongst other measures
- H1 – Affordable Housing: requires all housing schemes of 11 or more homes to deliver at least 31% affordable homes on site
- H5 – Self/Custom Build Housing: requires larger housing schemes to make provision for serviced plots for self-builders
- H6 – Housing Mix: sets out the principles to meet housing needs to 2033 by type and tenure
- BE1 – Heritage Assets: restates national policy on sustaining and enhancing heritage assets
- BE2 – Design: establishes some generic design principles for new development
- NE2 – Biodiversity: manages development schemes to avoid harm to biodiversity value
- I3 – Community Facilities: protects existing valued facilities from unnecessary loss.

3.9 The District Council has recently announced that the assumptions made in the Draft VALP in respect of housing supply have changed. It now seems likely that the VALP will not need to plan for as much unmet housing need from its



neighbouring districts (Chiltern and Wycombe) as originally thought. The implications of this are not yet known for parishes like Steeple Claydon and have resulted in a further delay to the timetable for the adoption of the VALP.

3.10 Even so, there are a number of important policy issues that have generated considerable concern – not least the rationale for distributing housing growth across the rural areas of the District – that may become clearer at that point. If so, then the final submission documents of the Neighbourhood Plan will take those matters into account as necessary.

3.11 Although it is likely that the Neighbourhood Plan will be examined before the adoption of the VALP, and therefore it must have regard to its general conformity with the saved policies of the AVDLP, the Parish Council has carefully considered the evidence and reasoning of the VALP.

Recent planning applications

3.12 The following key applications have been made/determined:

- Erection of up to 95 dwellings with associated means of access, new footpath links, children's play area, areas of open space and landscaping east of Buckingham Road. Application refused 13 May 2016; appeal to go to public enquiry spring 2017. (AVDC planning reference 15/02671/AOP).
- Erection of 60 dwellings with associated means of access off North End Road. Application approved 17 June 2016. (AVDC planning reference 15/01490/AOP).
- Erection of 12 dwellings adjacent to 34A North End Road. Awaiting decision. (AVDC planning reference 16/03311/AOP).
- AVDC planning application 12/00552/APP for 14 dwellings on land adjacent to Addison Road (Molly's Field) is pending.



4. LOCAL SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

4.1 The main issue faced by the Neighbourhood Plan is to plan for a scale of housing development over the plan period that, with the housing already committed, has no recent precedent. There have been 115 new homes consented since April 2013 with undetermined planning applications totalling another 121 homes on three sites. That scale of development will lead to a growth of the village of more than 25% within a decade.

4.2 This need not be a problem for local people, if new development creates opportunities to address longstanding problems in the village and is located on its least sensitive edges. The problems are the locations and premises of the village store (the Co-op) and GP surgery, both of which would benefit from better-located, modern buildings. The Co-op can be considered to be in the centre of the village but its building is far too small to meet the needs of the village and inadequate parking creates traffic and pedestrian safety hazards at the tight corner of West Street/Chaloners Hill. The surgery is popular and is able to meet the current needs of the village and wider area, but is limited in its capacity, has access problems for patients with impaired mobility, and already causes parking problems on the surrounding roads. Both sites are suited to redevelopment for housing.

4.3 The HS2 and East–West Rail proposals both pass through the Parish to the west and south of the village. Their construction over the plan period will itself be the most significant in terms of environmental effects. The Infrastructure Maintenance Depot proposed at the junction of the two projects and the rail works will alter the appearance of those parts of the Parish.

4.4 Beyond that, the Parish has no urgent social, economic or environmental issues that the Neighbourhood Plan has had to grapple with. Those matters that do need addressing are best dealt with at a national or District planning scale, if indeed the land use planning system is able to address them at all.



5. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 The Scoping Report identified the essential baseline environmental information to support this report. It noted the presence of 24 listed buildings scattered around the village (but no conservation area) and an archaeological notification area around St. Michael's Church (Grade II*). There are no designated sites of biodiversity value, though there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest just beyond the southern boundary of the Parish at Sheephouse Wood and the District Council has noted a small number of 'notable species' on edge of the village.

5.2 The landscape character differs between the northern and western sides of the village on the one hand ('Shallow Valleys' type), and the southern and eastern side on the other ('Wooded Rolling Lowlands' type). The sensitivities of those landscapes to new development also differs, with the land north and west of the village considered as more sensitive in principle than its other edges.

5.3 The area includes two rivers which, although not designated as 'main' by the Environment Agency, have been classified under the Water Framework Directive. Both the Padbury Brook and Claydon Brook are currently of moderate ecological status. The Thames River Basin Management Plan requires the restoration and enhancement of waterbodies to prevent their deterioration and promote recovery. Both these watercourses have associated floodplains of Flood Zones 2 and 3 that swing around the western edge of the village and across its north and south.



6. ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

6.1 To assess the environmental performance of the Neighbourhood Plan, the following assessment framework has been adopted. The proposed framework was consulted upon with the statutory consultees as part of the SEA Scoping Report. It is drawn from the most relevant SEA Objectives of the VALP so that, where possible and relevant, data sets can be shared for ongoing monitoring purposes.

6.2 In the consultation on the SEA Scoping Report, the statutory bodies made a series of suggestions for how the objectives and measures might be improved. Historic England raised a concern about the existence of unknown heritage value of land in the Parish. The Historic Environment Record has been consulted during the site assessment process and no such value has been identified on the proposed site allocations. Again, the planning application stage will enable such matters to be identified and addressed by a specific development scheme.

6.3 The selection of objectives for the proposed framework reflects the general sustainability issues of the parish and the likely scope of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Those objectives considered the most relevant informative for this purpose have been selected. The decision not to choose any particular policy objective does not necessarily mean that the objective has no relevance to the Plan but that it is unlikely to enable the merits of policy options to be measured and is therefore unhelpful for this purpose. Those matters can be addressed at the planning application stage.

Objective 1: Heritage

6.4 To conserve and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historical and cultural environment of the Parish:

- Will the policies protect and enhance the listed buildings and their settings?
- Will the policies ensure that archaeological notification areas are avoided if possible?

Objective 2: Landscape

6.5 To minimise the visual effects of new development on the landscape character of the Parish:

- Will the policies avoid allocating land for development in the most sensitive landscapes?
- Will the policies ensure that any development proposals on the edge of the village can be satisfactorily accommodated within its built form and structure?

Objective 3: Flooding

6.6 To reduce flood risk resulting from new development.

- Will the policies avoid development in an area of defined flood risk (i.e. flood zones 2 or 3)?
- Will the policies identify and mitigate any surface water flooding risks when allocating land for development?

6.4 In most cases, it is acknowledged that data is not collected or reported at a parish scale to enable a sensible assessment. This makes the identification of



cause-and-effect relationships between inputs and outputs very uncertain. However, the assessment does seek to identify the relative attributes of the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan to inform the reader.

7. ASSESSMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

7.1 The strategic objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are outlined in section 3 of this report. They cover a range of environmental issues in support of realising the visions of the community. Each of these objectives is assessed against the SA/SEA objectives in Table 2 below ('+' denotes a positive effect; '0' a neutral effect; and '-' a negative effect).

Table 2 Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan objectives

PROPOSED POLICIES	Heritage	Landscape	Flooding
Plan policies	1	2	3
SC1: Settlement Boundary	0/-	+	+
SC2: Land at Molly's Field	0	0/-	0
SC3: The Co-op	+	0	0
SC4: The GP surgery	0	0	0
SC5: Queen Catherine Road	0	0/-	0
SC6: Local Green Space	0	0	0
SC7: Community assets	+/0	0	0
SC8: Design	+	+	0

7.2 There is generally a neutral to positive relationship between the two sets of objectives, although the potential exists for negative effects in a number of cases. The positive relationships are those that result from the objective of the Plan to ensure that new buildings integrate well with the character of the village and its surrounding countryside. Its support for rural businesses and community assets may also have positive effects if they result in development that enhances the character of listed buildings and invests in their long term repair and maintenance. Similarly, improving rural businesses may create opportunities to invest in landscape enhancement.

7.3 The risks of negative effects are possible in almost all the objectives, if they lead to poorly located and/or designed development proposals. There is the potential for harmful heritage, landscape and flooding effects, especially with new housing development schemes. In each case, any policies in pursuit of these objectives must ensure that this potential has been taken into account and avoided, or at least minimised and satisfactorily mitigated.



8. ASSESSMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

8.1 The Neighbourhood Plan contains eight policies, which will have a series of environmental effects. Table 2, in Section 7, summarises the assessment of each policy. The assessment is of the proposed policies and their mitigation provisions.

8.2 In general terms, the policies will have neutral environmental impacts with a small number of positive effects and the potential for two negative effects. The Settlement Boundary of Policy SC1 will have the positive effect of containing the growth of the village to avoid unplanned incursions into the landscape, or into flood risk areas.

8.3 However, in promoting development inside the boundary as a matter of principle, there is the potential for a negative heritage effect if the location and/or design of infill and windfall proposals do not respect the character of listed buildings and their settings. Policy SC8 on Design is helpful in this case, as it establishes some key design principles with this in mind.

8.4 In accommodating the allocations of policies SC2 and SC5 to meet local housing needs, Policy SC1 and those policies will inevitably lead to a harmful landscape effect given their respective edge of village, greenfield locations. At Molly's Field, the supporting evidence provided by the developer has indicated that a scheme of approximately 110 homes and new sites for a convenience store and GP surgery can be accommodated on the site without the loss of many existing landscape features and with the bolstering of those features to effectively mitigate the impact of development on the countryside to the west. It has also shown how there should be no harmful effects on the listed buildings on West Street, as these are appreciated in views from West Street but the site is insignificant in the setting of those buildings to the south. Again, the provision of new land to enable the relocation of the convenience store and surgery will deliver considerable social benefits for the village, which are outside the scope of this SEA.

8.5 The Queen Catherine Road site is small and is already enclosed on two sides by existing residential development and on its third (to the east) by a mature boundary of trees and hedgerow. A small scheme that retains the public right of way across the site should be capable of being accommodated within the village envelope without any landscape effect. Nor does the land fall within the setting to the listed St. Michael's Church, and so avoids any harm to heritage.

8.6 In the absence of sufficient available brownfield or other land within the village, any residual harmful effect cannot be avoided. However, in both cases, many of these effects can be mitigated successfully, given the existing relationship between the sites and the village edges. Both are contained within the village and benefit from the topography and enclosed nature of the land.

9. ASSESSMENT OF REASONABLE POLICY ALTERNATIVES

9.1 The assessment is obliged to consider any reasonable alternatives to the proposed policies. In practice, most of the alternatives to the proposed policies are having no policy (a 'No policy' position) and relying upon other development plan policies or national policy. But in the case of the proposed site allocations, other sites have been promoted by land owners and some have been assessed here as alternatives (see Table 3).

Table 3 Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy alternatives

ALTERNATIVES	Heritage	Landscape	Flooding
SEA objectives	1	2	3
Plan policies			
SC1: Settlement Boundary			
• Site 001 The Glebe, off West Street	0	-	0
• Site 002 Langston & Tasker	+/-	0	0
• Site 006 Claydon Garage	0/-	0	0
• Site 007 Chestnut Leys	0	0	0
• Site 011 Buckingham Road	0	-	0
SC2: Land at Molly's Field			
• Housing only	0	0/-	0
• Smaller scheme	0	0	0
SC3: The Co-op			
• No policy	-	0	0
SC4: The GP Surgery			
• No policy	0	0	0
SC5: Queen Catherine Road			
• No policy	0	0	0
SC6: Local Green Space			
• No policy	0	0	0
SC7: Community Assets			
• No policy	0	0	0
SC8: Design			
• No policy	0	0	0

9.2 In respect of the alternatives to the allocation policies SC2 and SC5, as accommodated by the Settlement Boundary of Policy SC1, the assessment has considered the impacts of the other five sites that were submitted to the District Council for HELAA assessment and have not already been consented.

9.3 The Site Assessments Report provides a brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the sites, not just in environmental terms, but also in terms of their social and economic effects. In environmental terms, only one of the sites would deliver a positive (heritage) effect – the Langston & Tasker Bus Garage on Buckingham Road. However, although its redevelopment as



brownfield land would be beneficial in terms of improving the appearance of the site in a prominent location in the village, its loss as valuable employment land would outweigh that effect.

9.4 Of the other sites, none perform better than the sites selected, though none perform significantly worse either. The main alternative to the Molly's Field site of Policy SC2 would deliver a similar scale of housing development and, in theory, could also accommodate relocated food store and surgery uses. However, in refusing the application, the District Council considers there are landscape effects of development in that location that such a scale of development could not satisfactorily mitigate (even though the landscape character assessment concluded that in general terms that side of the village was less sensitive to development).

9.5 It is not known if it would have been possible to consider the site for a relocation of the food store and/or surgery, as the planning application (without such provision) was made before the Parish Council had considered these matters. Furthermore, it is noted that when asked to give a preference between the development of that site and Molly's Field, a significant majority of local people favoured the latter (and there were many objections submitted to the planning application). Whilst this is not a matter for the SEA report, it explains why the Parish Council has chosen its preferred option and raises the question of whether or not the Buckingham Road option could be considered a 'reasonable alternative' for this purpose.

9.6 In respect of the other policies, the reasonable alternative of having no policy will have only neutral effects, as proposals will be judged against other national or local planning policies. It is possible that the absence of a policy may make it marginally more difficult for the community to achieve an objective, but this is not enough to conclude there would be a negative effect. Only the absence of a Co-op policy may lead to a negative heritage effect, as the District Council would have to rely on generic design guidance to judge the merits of a scheme at this prominent location.



10. SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT

10.1 In overall terms, therefore, the sustainability effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are generally assessed as neutral but are occasionally positive. A combination of the proposed mitigation measures of the policies and the use of other Development Plan policies to determine planning applications will effectively avoid any negative impacts. In no case, does the assessment indicate that a reasonable alternative would deliver a more sustainable outcome.



11. MONITORING

11.1 The Parish Council will monitor the progress of the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan using the measures identified in Table 1. The data for some of these measures is collected by the District Council in its planning monitoring reports. In other cases, the Parish Council will endeavour to collect data on an annual basis to report on the progress of the plan. It is likely the Parish Council will choose to review the Neighbourhood Plan on a five-yearly cycle and it will be informed by this monitoring activity when considering if and how to update the policies.



APPENDIX A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Screening Opinion Extract

The following are extracts from the Screening Opinion published by Aylesbury Vale District Council in January 2016 in relation to the Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan. They comprise the detailed assessment in Section 4 of the report and the conclusion of Section 5. The full report has been published on the District Council and Parish Council websites.

Table 1: Establishing the Need for SEA		
Stage	Y/ N	Reason
1. Is the plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted by a Local Planning Authority, Aylesbury Vale District Council.
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Plan is an optional plan produced by Steeple Claydon Parish Council.
3. Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning purposes, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Art 3.2(a)).
4. Will the plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	A district wide HRA Screening for the Aylesbury Vale was prepared to assess the former Vale of Aylesbury plan (approximately 50 at Steeple Claydon). As the levels of development in the Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Development Plan are broadly similar (likely to be around 100-150 new homes), and are not in the vicinity of sites of Special Areas of Conservation it is unlikely a further HRA Screening Assessment is needed. A new Assessment for the levels of growth and locations in the forthcoming Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan will consider the effects of development needed across the district including Steeple Claydon parish.
5. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan is proposing to make allocations to accommodate potentially around 100-150 dwellings. It is possible areas of land might be allocated for commercial use and Local Green Space designations could be identified. Local Green Space designation would not change the current use of the land.
6. Does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan will set a framework for future development consents of projects, including land allocated for housing and employment.
7. Is the plans sole purpose to serve the	N	The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is



national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)		not for any of the projects listed in Art 3.8, 3.9.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have a significant effect on the environment as the policies will determine the future use of land and will guide development in the area.
	1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	Y The Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan will set out a spatial vision for the designated Neighbourhood Area and provide a framework for proposals for development such as housing, community facilities employment and the protection of valued open space.
	1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	N The SCNP, where possible, will respond to rather than influence other plans or programmes. A Neighbourhood Plan can only provide policies for the area it covers while the policies at the District and National level provide a strategic context for the SCNP to be in general conformity with. None of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have a direct impact on other plans in neighbouring areas.
	1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N Proposals set out in the SCNP are planned to balance environmental, social and economic considerations of sustainable development. However the SCNP recognises that for rural communities such as Steeple Claydon, the importance of the surrounding environment is particularly acute. It is considered that the SCNP will have a positive impact on local environmental assets and places valued by local people in the Neighbourhood Area.
	1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	N Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan will allocate housing and potentially employment sites. The housing allocations could be for potentially around 100-150 dwellings spread over the plan period and on more than one site. It is likely these will have to be built on greenfield land. The impact on traffic flow from the proposed developments is not expected to be a concern given that the overall levels of residential growth proposed are unlikely to give rise to significant additional car movements. Employment provision could potentially create more of an impact on



		<p>highways and air quality but if employment provision is allocated in Steeple Claydon it is likely to be too smaller scale to be of particular concern.</p> <p>The Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan could potentially look to address transport problems through policies in the plan which would have a positive impact on the environment.</p> <p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas within or near to the Neighbourhood Area.</p>
1 (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	N	The SCNP is being produced to be in general conformity with the AVDLP and national policy. The plan has no relevance to the implementation of community legislation.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	It is highly unlikely there will be any irreversible damaging environmental impacts associated with the SCNP, it is intended to have a positive effect on sustainability.
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	N	It is highly unlikely there will be any negative cumulative effects of the policies, rather it is likely it will have moderate positive effects. Any impact will be local in nature.
2 (c) the trans boundary nature of the effects	N	Effects will be local with no expected impacts on neighbouring areas.
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	N	No risks have been identified.
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	N	The Neighbourhood Area covers an area which is 1,347 ha and contains a population is of 2,278 residents (2011 census).
2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards (iii) intensive land-use	N	<p>The SCNP is unlikely to adversely affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to its natural or cultural heritage. If anything is will provide greater support to enhance the setting of heritage, heritage assets and green spaces.</p> <p>The Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan potentially could include policies to improve the design of development within the village if it is deemed to be needed. Therefore the plan if anything will have a positive impact on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and the areas heritage assets.</p> <p>There could also be specific policies to look</p>



		to enhance recreation areas, green corridors and protect trees and hedgerows which will have a positive effect environmentally and help protect the rural character of Steeple Claydon.
2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	N	There are no such designations within the Neighbourhood area or close enough to be impacted.

5.0 Screening Outcome for Neighbourhood Plans with Allocations

- 5.1 Having reviewed the criteria Aylesbury Vale District Council concludes that the Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan has some potential to have significant environmental effects beyond those expected by 'strategic' district-wide policies of the Local Plan, although the magnitude and location of these effects is difficult to ascertain at this stage of the plan making process. Therefore the best course of action is to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment, particularly as this is a process that needs to be started in the early stages of the plan making process and cannot be retrofitted at a later stage. Although not a requirement, we would recommend this incorporates a Sustainability Appraisal to consider more widely the balance of sustainability and to help ensure the plan meets the basic conditions.



APPENDIX B STEEPLE CLAYDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: BASELINE DATA

Title	Source	Data	Trends and consequences
Historic Landscape			
Settlement Hierarchy	AVDC's withdrawn VALP	The settlement of Steeple Claydon has been identified/ designated as a 'larger village' in the VALP and has therefore been identified as a village that should provide limited growth.	Due to the rural character of the Parish, it is important to keep the settlement's character. The SCNP recognises the housing obligations of the village and delivers a solution which protects the nature of the settlement.
Listed Building	Steeple Claydon Fact Pack	There are 24 listed buildings currently in Steeple Claydon Parish. 23 of the listed buildings are Grade II, and the Church of St Michael's is Grade II*.	Steeple Claydon has a number of listed buildings, however the parish does not contain any conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments or areas of historic land. (See Map 7)
Archaeological Notification Areas	Steeple Claydon Fact Pack; VALP	The church is a listed building mentioned above, but its surroundings are also classified as an Archaeological Notification Area. The site of the church is also classified as a 'historic land use' due to its age and historic value.	Development should be sensitive around the church site because of the historic land use/Area of Archaeological Notification.
Other areas of significance	Magic Map Parish Boundary location	While the Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Area does not possess many historic constraints in it such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade I listed buildings, Green Belt or Areas of Natural Beauty, there is an area designated Site of	SSSI Impact Risk Zones were developed by Natural England to make assessments of the potential risks posed by development. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified, and indicate the type of



		<p>Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) just outside of the Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Area, to the south on the other side of the Parish boundary. While this doesn't directly affect the Parish, there is an SSSI Impact Risk Zone that does encroach into the Parish Boundary and spread throughout it.</p>	<p>development proposals which could potentially have adverse impacts.</p> <p>This should be taken into account when permitting new developments in the Parish. Developments should be sympathetic to their surroundings.</p> <p>(See Map 8)</p>
Surface water flooding	Steeple Claydon Fact Pack	<p>There has been shown to be a high-level risk of surface water flooding in Steeple Claydon, particularly on the main roads directly surrounding the village. There are also areas of medium surface water flood risk.</p>	<p>New developments in areas particularly susceptible to surface water flooding will need to effectively demonstrate they can mitigate the risk of flooding without having adverse effects on surrounding areas.</p> <p>(See Map 9)</p>
River water flooding	Environment Agency	<p>There is a river flood warning in Flood Zone 3 to the north and north east of Steeple Claydon village.</p>	<p>New developments in areas particularly susceptible to river water flooding, or on flood plains particularly susceptible to flooding, need to effectively demonstrate they can mitigate the risk of flooding without having adverse effects on surrounding areas.</p> <p>(See Map 10)</p>

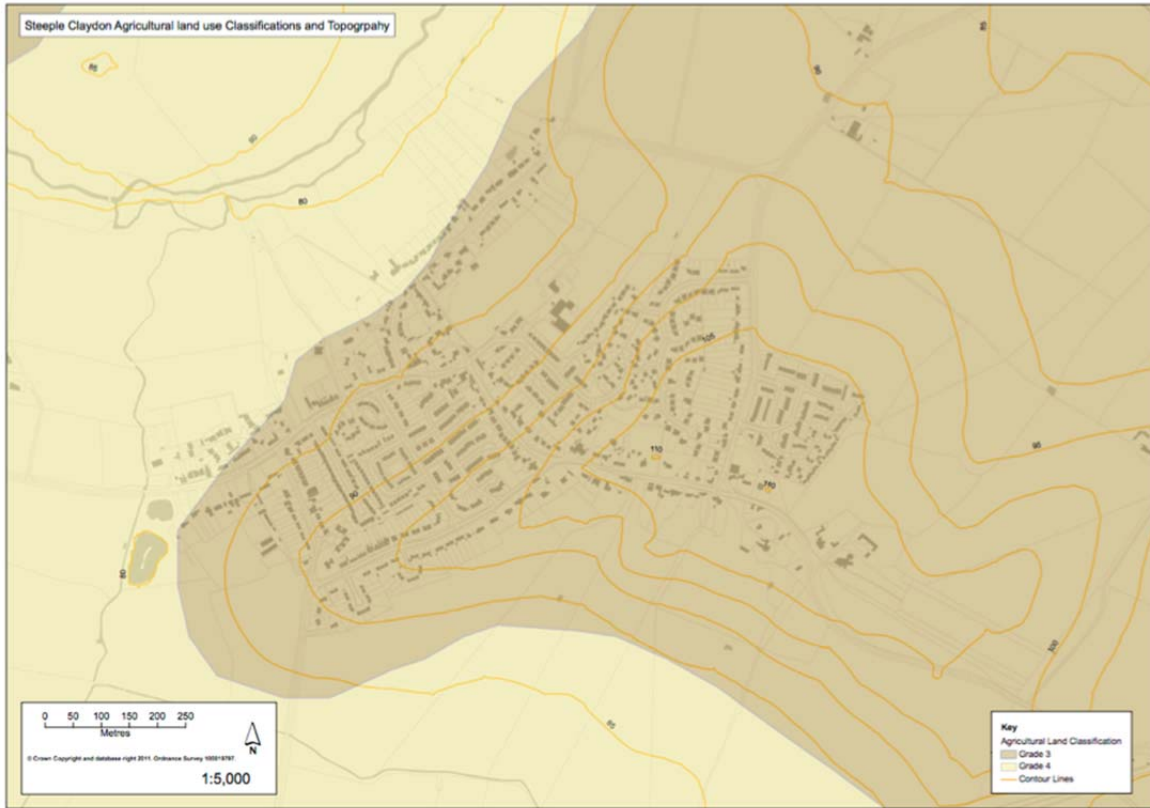


Figure 1: Map 2 -Steeple Claydon agricultural land use classifications and topography

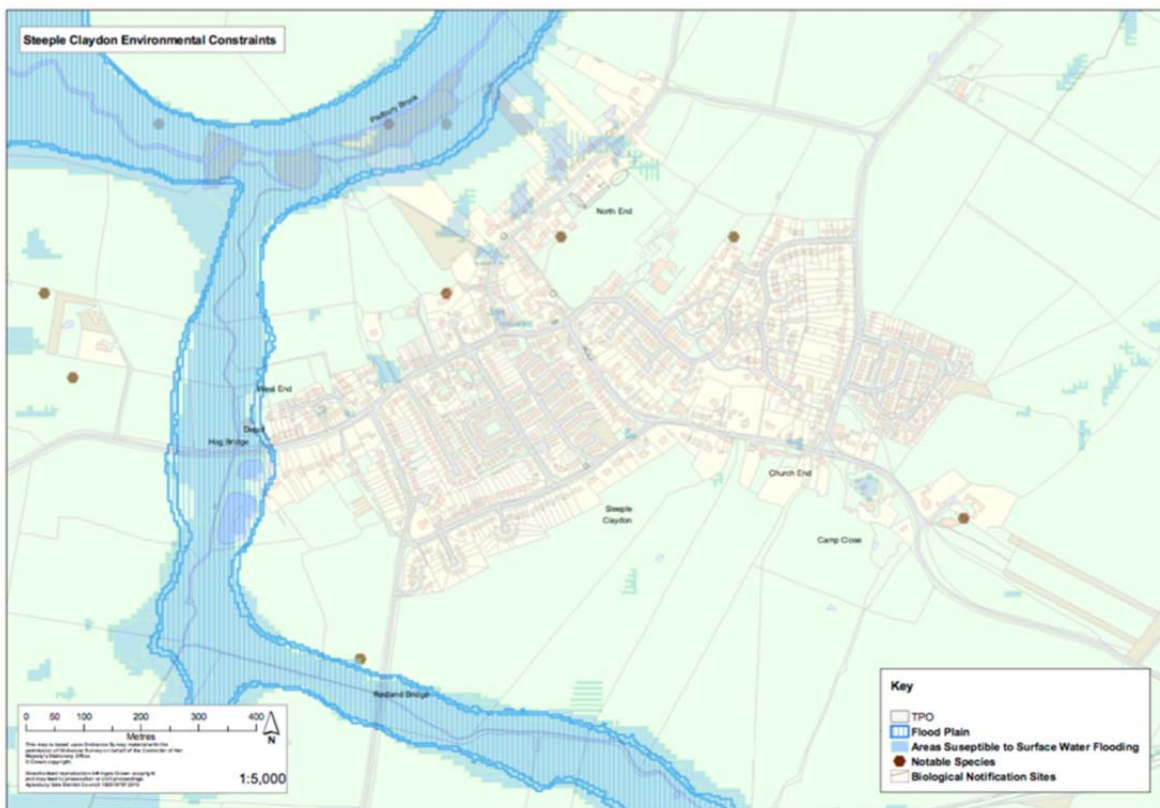


Figure 2: Map 3 - Steeple Claydon environmental constraints

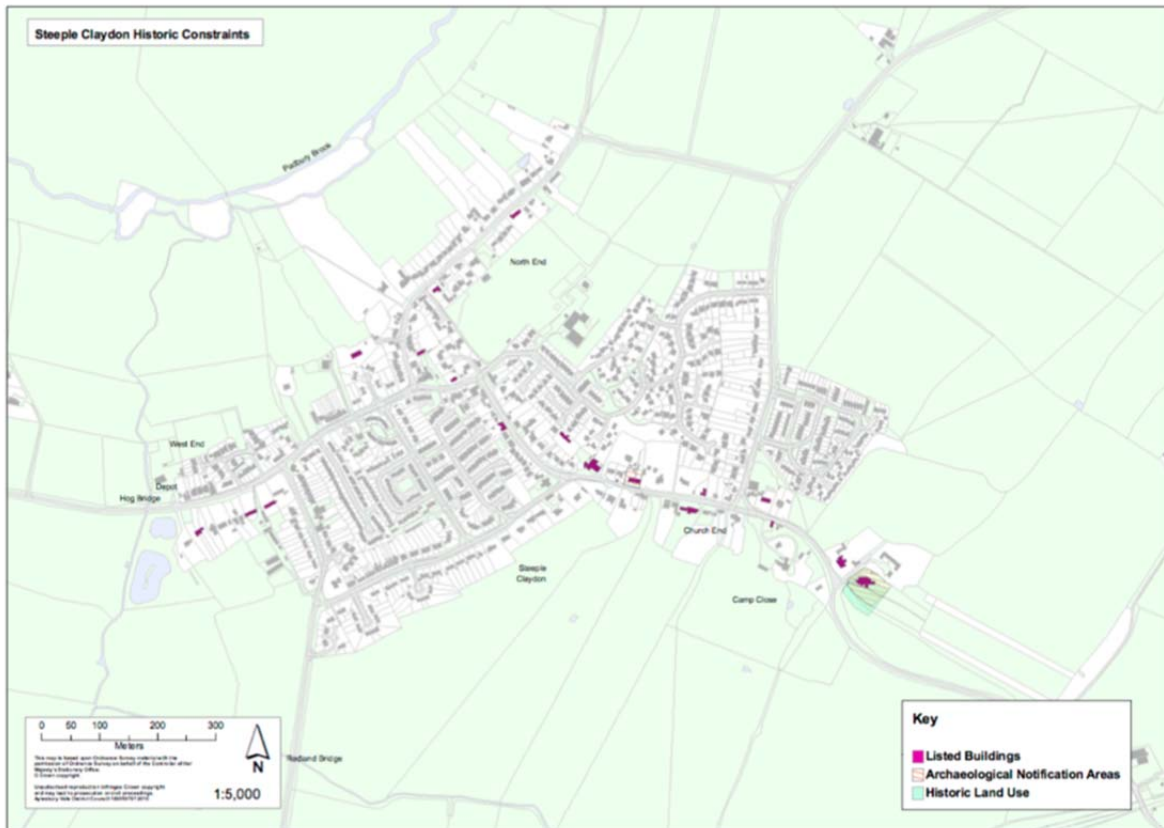


Figure 3: Map 4 - Steeple Claydon historic constraints

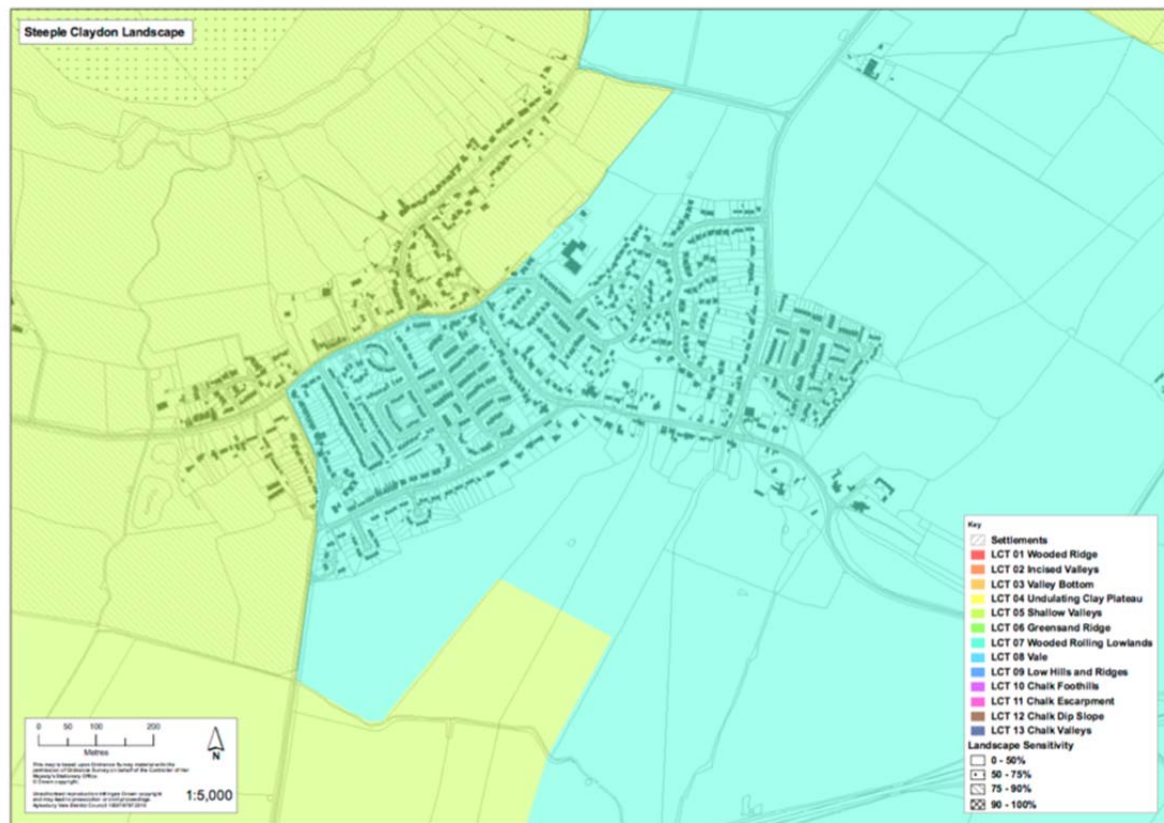


Figure 4: Map 5 - Steeple Claydon landscape

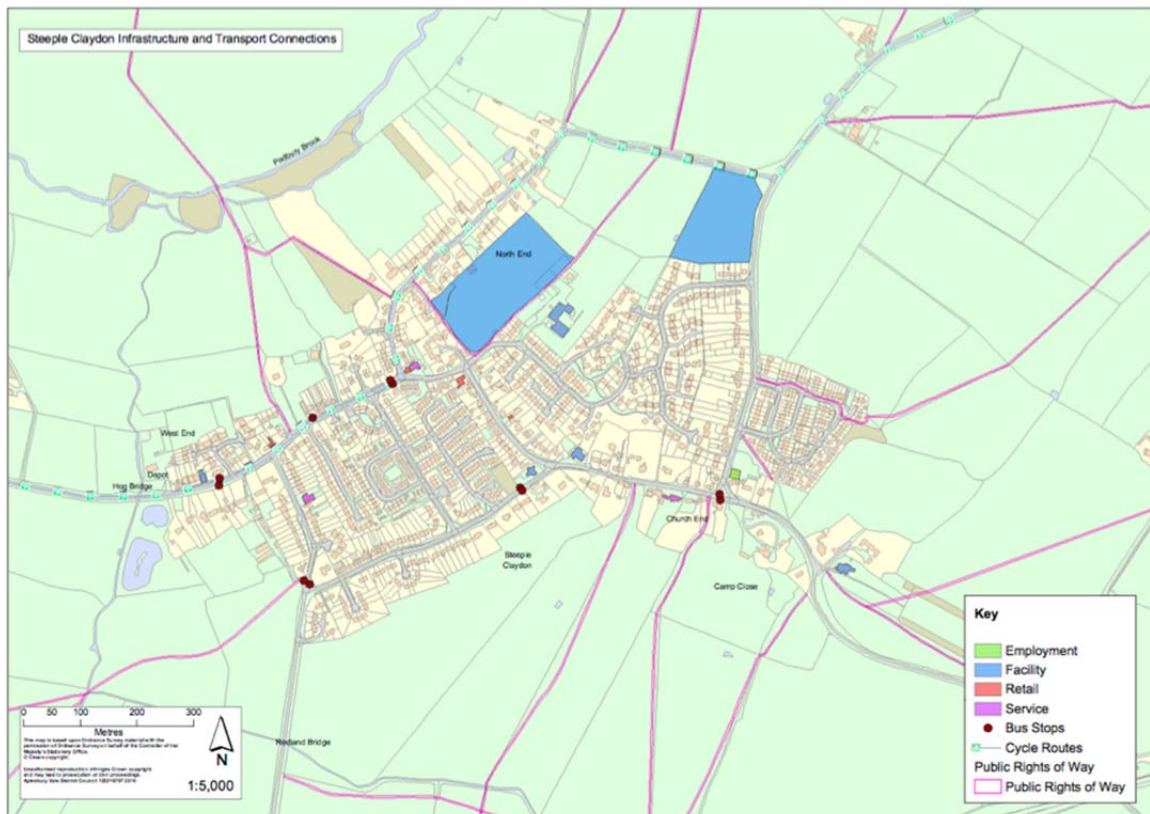


Figure 5: Map 6 - Steeple Claydon infrastructure and transport connections

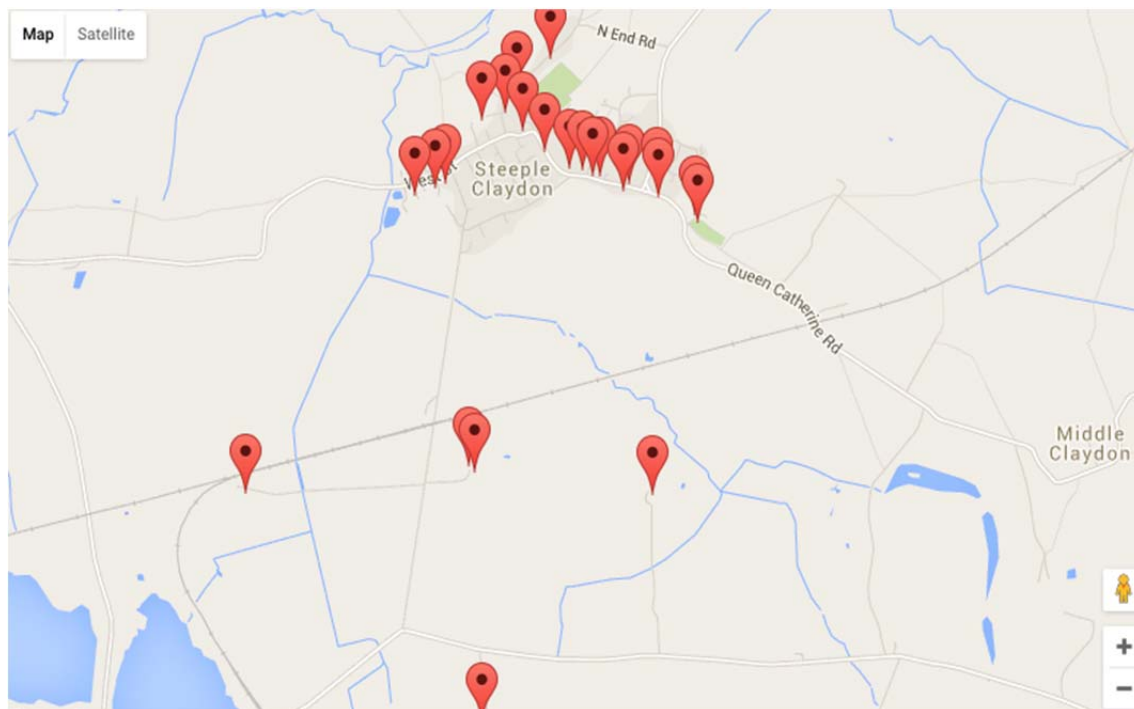


Figure 6: Map 7 - Listed buildings in Steeple Claydon

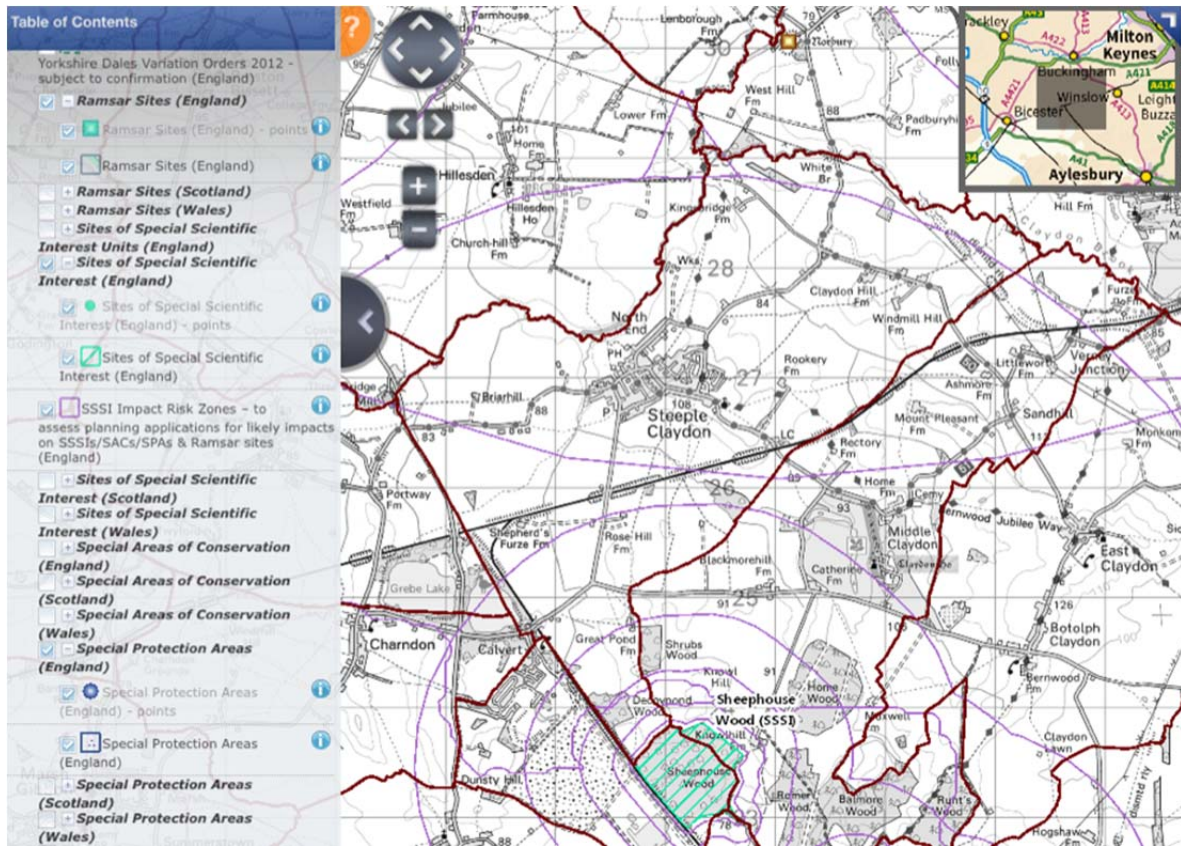


Figure 7: Map 8 - Steeple Claydon Magic Map – SSSI Impact Risk Zone

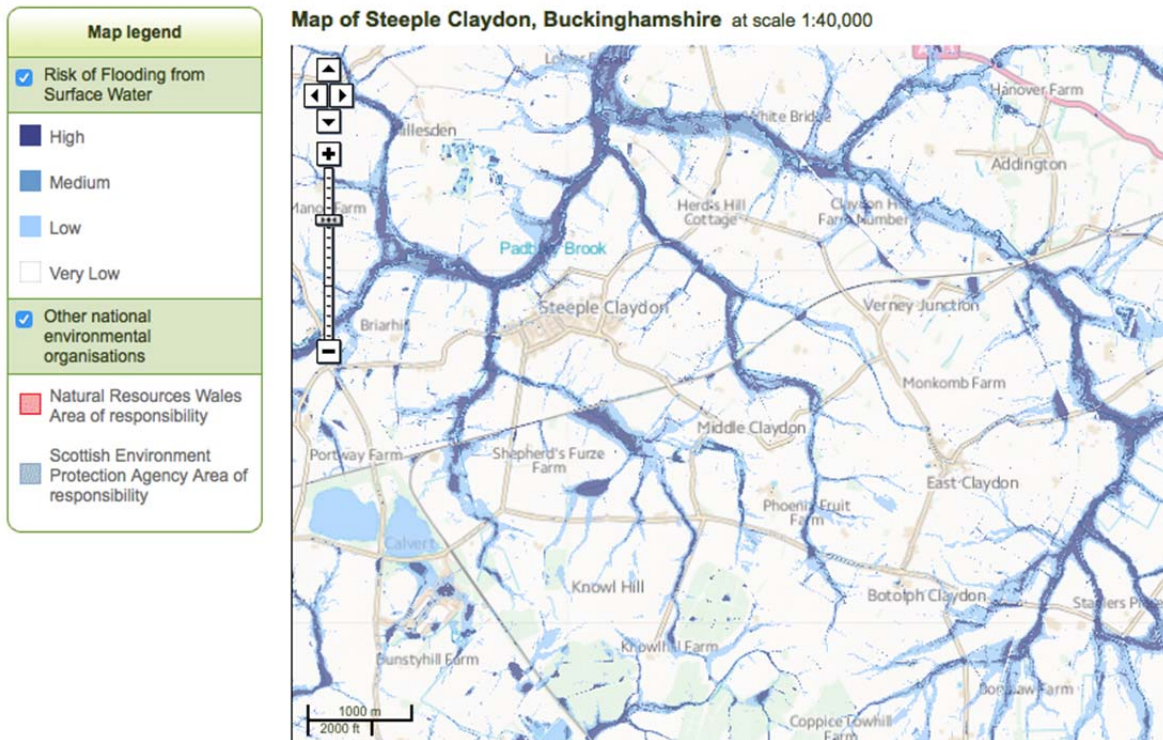


Figure 8: Map 9 - Steeple Claydon map of surface water flooding

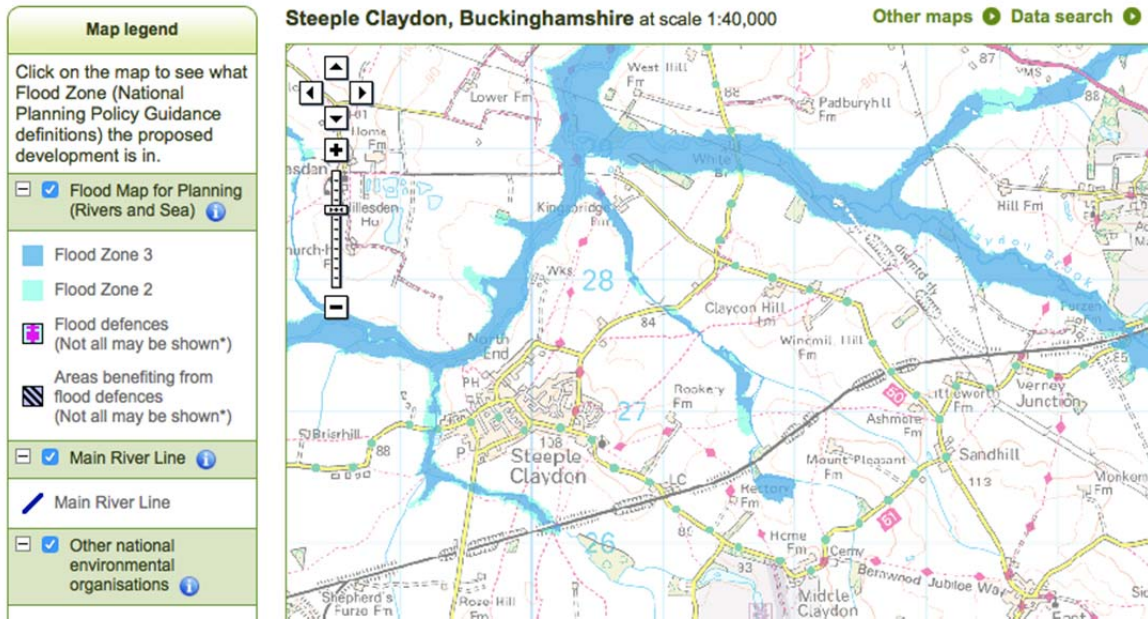


Figure 9: Map 10 - Steeple Claydon map of river flooding